

# MEDICAL CURIOSITIES

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Anybody infected by the humour of Ash and Lake's Bizarre Books (particularly Chapter 4, "The Right Person for the Job") will be continually on the lookout for similar bibliographic anomalies. Working in a medical library, I have developed the habit of collecting references in which the author's name fits like a surgical glove onto the title of his work.

Thumbing through Garrison and Morton's medical bibliography and Bowker's books in print, I discovered that Soranus, the second-century Greek author of On Midwifery, was one of the first to discuss inflammation of the rectum during pregnancy. The German Ernst Von Bumm did research on the gonococcus in venereal disease, and his contemporary, Ernst Finger, was a pioneer in gonorrheal discharge of the vagina. The anatomist Adolf Fick (allow for the Middle High German vocalic sound shift) studied heat production during muscular activity, and his namesake, Rudolph Fick, concentrated on the myological action of the pelvis in males. In England, Alfred Tubby published his Deformities while William Little wrote "On the Nature and Treatment of Deformities of the Human Frame". One of the first psychiatrists was William Battie, who issued his Treatise on Madness in 1758. Timothy Bright composed a Treatise of Melancholie, and Thomas Trotter wrote the first book on alcoholism and its effects on the human body. Fielding's friend, John Freke, is remembered for his article on "A Case of Extraordinary Exostoses on the Back of a Boy". In America, Karen Horney published her Feminine Psychology, Gene Starbuck his Models of Human Sexuality, and Julius Fast The Body Language of Sex, Power and Aggression.

In modern times, significant research appears not in monographs but in the vast maze of published journal articles. A search of the MEDLINE database of the world's medical literature reveals there is a British gynaecologist Raper, an Australian midwife Ripper, a Dutch obstetrician Naaktgeboren (born naked), a Russian infertility specialist Semenova, a German cancer therapist Quack, husband and wife geneticists P. and T. Rabbitts, a bacteriologist Buggs, a dermatologist Boyle, a haematologist Blood, an orthopedist Bone, a gastroenterologist Gut, a neurologist Brain, and an Italian stomatologist called Orefici. There is a Chinese obstetrician K. Cong, a Baltimore surgeon A. Munster, a behavioural psychologist Frankenstein, and even a medico named Mengele, studying blood levels of kidney transplant patients in Switzerland.

I have unearthed some forty articles in which the surname of the author or co-author seems appropriate to the title itself:

- Cerebral Oxygenation During Recurrent Seizures, by T. J. Sick  
 Competing for Medi-cal Business: Why Hospitals Did, and Did Not  
 Get Contracts, by W. Price  
 The Ward Sister -- Nurse, Manager, or Teacher?, by A. Ward  
 Local Circuitry of Identified Projection Neurons in Cat Visual Cor-  
 tex Brain Slices, by L. C. Katz  
 The Effect of Methacholine Inhalation Challenge on Regional Residual  
 Volume in Patients With Subclinical Asthma, by J. R. Horsley  
 How Americans Say They Drink: Preliminary Data From Two Recent  
 National Surveys, by N. Munch and J. Coakley  
 Doppler Color Flow Mapping of the Fetal Heart, by J. P. Youngblood  
 Female Genital Mutilation, by L. P. Cutner  
 The Management of Recurrent Colorectal Cancer, by M. Killingback  
 The Course of Affective Disorders, by J. Angst  
 Genetic Variation in AIDS Viruses, by J. M. Coffin  
 Electrocoagulation in the Arrest of Gastrointestinal Hemorrhage,  
 by A. G. Shitov  
 Hematoma of the Rectus Sheath Complicated by an Acute Abdomen,  
 by A. Shita  
 Crohn Disease of Penile and Scrotal Skin, by A. G. Cockburn  
 Normal and Abnormal Bowel Function, by H. Bottomley  
 Dose Effects of Raw Soybean Flour on Pancreatic Growth, by R.  
 A. Crass and P. S. Oates  
 Bowel Obstruction in Patients With Ovarian Cancer: A Search For  
 Prognostic Factors, by R. J. Seymour  
 The Acute Effects of Coffee and Caffeine on Human Interdigestive  
 Exocrine Pancreatic Secretion, by R. J. Coffey  
 A Case of Sudden Death as the Result of an Overdose of Berotek,  
 by I. V. Popov  
 Effect of Tobacco Consumption on Semen Quality of a Population  
 of Hypofertile Males, by R. K. Dikshit  
 Errors in Blood Glucose Determination, by M. Deadman  
 Gallstone Pancreatitis, by H. H. Stone  
 Hygienic Aspects of the Study and Prevention of Acute Intestinal  
 Infections, by A. P. Shitskova  
 Psychological Stress and the Passage of a Standard Meal Through  
 the Stomach and Small Intestine in Man, by K. Swallow  
 Kinetics of Trichloroethylene in Repeated Exposure of Volunteers,  
 by A. Monster  
 Role of Crystalloid Solutions in Supplementing Massive Transfusions,  
 by M. Vlad  
 Incidence of Multiple Pregnancy After In-vitro Fertilisation and  
 Embryo Transfer, by P. J. Quinn  
 A Program Using Medical Students to Teach High School Students  
 About AIDS, by A. Gay, Jr.  
 Pesticides in Ground Water Beneath Irrigated Farmland in Nebraska,  
 by G. A. Junk  
 ABC of AIDS, by M. Spittle  
 New Rectal-Mucosal Biopsy Forceps, by J. H. Butt  
 First Aid. When Casualties Are Critical, by M. Bangs

- Preparation of Sex Education Programs at a Local Level, by Y. Fukuhara and K. Fukuda  
 Morphometric and Radiographic Characteristics of Tibial Bone of Broiler Chickens With Twisted Leg Disorders, by J. J. Cruickshank  
 Smoking and Lung Cancer, by C. R. Ash  
 Single-Dose Prophylaxis in Gynaecological Surgery, by G. J. Pricker  
 Ventilation in Operating Rooms, by R. Blowers  
 The Use of Drugs in Swimming, by J. C. Puffer  
 Staging and Surgery in Testicular Cancer, by O. Schmucki  
 Testicular Syphilis, by F. Wart

### **WASPLEG AND OTHER MNEMONICS**

*Why WASPLEG? Well, suppose you are challenged to name the seven deadly sins and don't have a reference book handy; this mnemonic reminds you of the initial letters of Wrath, Avarice, Sloth, Pride, Lust, Envy, and Gluttony. Bart Benne's 1988 book with the above title, issued in paperback by Taylor Publishing of Dallas for \$7.95, contains hundreds of such memory aids, including the astronomical one I sprung on my wife-to-be during an early date: O, Be A Fine Girl, Kiss Me Right Now (listing the spectral types of stars from hot to cool). (She wasn't amused.) Famous mnemonics include the memorization of pi using sentences whose word-lengths mimic its digits (Sir, I send a rhyme excelling...), the I-before-E-except-after-C spelling rule, and the R months for eating oysters.*

*The mnemonics in this book seem mainly of use to students cramming for a test or contestants preparing for Jeopardy. Why learn the English monarchs in order when you can look them up? What is needed in the field of mnemonics is the systematic development of methods for building your own, for remembering telephone numbers and the like. In crafting a mnemonic, one must balance efficiency (the ratio of the number of letters in the mnemonic to the number of letters in the item to be recalled) against memorability; most acrostics favor the latter, requiring whole sentences to commit a handful of letters to memory. (If the order doesn't matter, one can often anagram the letters and achieve a more compressed format, as WASPLEG demonstrates.) Are initial letters enough, or should two or three letters of each word be placed in the mnemonic? If several letters, which ones? What sort of information other than word-lists or number sequences lend themselves to mnemonics? How should one tailor the mnemonic to the type of information? In the field of mnemonics there are many more questions than answers.*